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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EPET](#) [MASS](#) [MARR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: AMBASSADOR AND UK HIGH COMMISSIONER SEEK  
CLARITY ON GON NIGER DELTA (ND) MINISTRY PLANS

REF: A. ABUJA 310

[1](#)B. LAGOS 33

Classified By: Ambassador Robin R. Sanders for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Ambassador and the UK High Commissioner Bob Dewar went jointly to see the New Minister for Niger Delta Affairs, Chief Ufot Ekaette, March 16, to seek a better understanding of what the Ministry's plans were for forward progress on the Niger Delta. The meeting was an attempt to achieve several things: to get clarity on whether the Ministry was even active; to ask the Minister's views of the Gulf of Guinea Energy and Security Strategy (GGESS); to restate our countries' concern for security in the region and the need for an acceptable political framework to address real grievances; and to reiterate the various offers of support on security issues from our two countries to the GON. In addition to the Ambassador and High Commissioner Dewar, Niger Delta Minister of State, Godsday Orubebe, also attended.

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador opened the meeting by restating her early comments to the Minister (ref. A) about the need for a political framework to help bring about forward movement on resolving both the security and development issues in the Delta. High Commissioner Dewar also noted that it was hard for Nigeria's friends and partners to be helpful in the region until this question of a political framework was addressed. We added that we hoped the Minister could brief us on where things stood on getting the ND Ministry up and running, and on what initiatives the Ministry was undertaking.

[1](#)3. (C) Ekaette said he very much appreciated our efforts, concern, and assistance, and that he saw this joint meeting as underscoring the friendship between our countries. He said that he and his team had been working on a number of fronts, and that he would highlight what they were. The ND Minister also thank the Ambassador for her briefing paper on the GGESS, since, until she noted the initiative, he was unaware of it; he asked her if she had additional information. Ambassador provided him with the minutes from the March 2008 GGESS session, the last one held in Abuja. The Minister informed the Ambassador and High Commissioner that he had called together an inter-ministerial meeting for March 30, which would include his colleague Minister of Petroleum Rilwanu Lukman, and the new Group Managing Director

of NNPC, Mohammed Barkindo. Minister Ekaette added that he hoped that, during this March 30 session, they could determine who in the GON would take the lead on GGESS, which is now housed within NNPC, but which he viewed as not the best place for it. Ambassador informed the Minister she had recently met with the new NNPC head (being reported SEPTTEL; see also ref. B), who explained to her that he did not believe that the GGESS initiative belonged under his organization.

¶4. (C) Ekaette then turned to Minister of State Orubebe, and asked him to explain their current action plan for the Delta.

Orubebe said the ND Ministry had developed a three-pronged approach, and had had several meetings with key militant leaders from Ateke Tom, and Government Ekpompolo ("Tom Polo") to Victor Ebikabowei ("Commander Boyloaf"). He also said they had met with youth in the communities and community leaders and other stakeholders in developing this plan, which they hope to release in April 2009 at the earliest. He added, however, that the Ministry still needed time to ensure that everything could be worked out before officially announcing the plan, so the April date could slip.

¶5. (C) According to Orubebe, the action plan included: a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) component, employment for youth, training for both youth and militants, with amnesty for militants being connected to the successful design of a DDR plan. Orubebe added that they had to divide the groups in the ND into two categories: the hard core militants and the "restive youth" (meaning those who had not yet committed themselves to a life of either crime or

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militancy). For the "restive youth," the GON would provide immediate jobs such as security guards at public institutions and oil facilities, with a training program intended to teach them technical skills in the oil service sector. With the hard core militants like Ateke Tom and others, the GON would need to work out and agree a comprehensive DDR program, before it was prepared to discuss training programs or amnesty with them. Ambassador asked Orubebe what the views of the militants were on this plan. Orubebe claimed that those like Tom Polo, and Boyloaf have expressed a desire to come out of the bush and lead normal lives. (Note: We have hear this from a few other third party sources in the past. Whether it is true or not remains to be seen. End note.) Ambassador then asked the Ministers whether they were reaching out to those international institutions, such as IOM, which had expertise in helping to design DDR programs. Ekaette replied that they had not yet, but asked her to explain a little more about IOM, which she did.

¶6. (C) High Commissioner Dewar welcomed the information from the two Ministers, but re-stressed that a well thought out political framework was still key to ensuring that their actions were successful. He asked the Minister when we could hope to hear back on the GON's decision on which government entity would have the lead on GGESS, so that donor partners would know how to proceed and could so inform their capitals.

The Minister promised that he would give us a preliminary result of the upcoming March 30 inter-ministerial discussion on this issue, and hoped that the GON could provide a definitive answer by mid-to-late April.

¶7. (C) Comment: The GON is not known for being fast on its feet, so it will be surprising if the inter-ministerial committee is able to make a decision on GGESS at the March 30 meeting, and even more so if it actually moves to implement it. It is good to know that they are talking directly to the Delta militants, and that the Ministry appears to be more active than outward impressions would suggest. One worrying sign is, however, that the President's office has been quiet on the issue for some time, and has yet to respond to the recommendations provide by the stakeholders from the Niger Delta Technical Committee, a question which is beginning to become a source of consternation in the press.

End comment.  
SANDERS